

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in this application. Claims 1-3 and 14-16 are cancelled.  
Claim 13 is amended. No new matter is being added.

The Examiner is asked to change the Attorney Docket number to 20115-06977.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-7 and 12-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Botts et al.

Claim 4 recites:

A computer implemented method for processing electronic messages, said method comprising:  
receiving a first message into an enterprise mail system, said first message from a first human message sender;  
storing said first message in a message database;  
assigning a category entry from a category database to said first message, said category entry containing information for handling particular incoming messages;  
delivering said first message to a first enterprise mail system user; and  
providing a template response message to said first enterprise mail system user using information in said category entry, said template response message including a set of message recipients defined in said category entry.

One advantage of the invention of claim 4 is that generated template responses include a set of predefined message recipients according to the assigned category entry. This means that responses of one type (e.g., presales inquiries) can have a first set of message recipients, while responses of another type (e.g., invoice disputes) can have a second set of message recipients.

Botts discloses an e-mail management system in which incoming e-mails are recorded in a database and provided to customer service representatives (CSRs) for response. While Botts describes assigning a category to a message and indexing and retrieving standard responses according to a particular category, Botts does not describe

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generating a template response "including a set of message recipients defined in said category entry." There is no correlation in Botts between a particular category of a message and the recipients of a response message. Accordingly, Botts does not teach the elements of claim 4, and claim 4 is patentable over Botts. Dependent claims 5-13 depend from patentable independent claim 4, and thus derive their patentability both from the patentability of claim 4 as well as from their own patentable features.

The Examiner rejected claims 14-21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Billmers et al in view of Angotti.

Claim 17 recites:

A method for processing electronic mail messages, the method comprising:  
receiving an electronic mail message;  
analyzing the contents of the received electronic mail message;  
responsive to the analysis of the contents of the message,  
    associating the electronic mail message with a message category; and  
automatically generating a skeleton response message to at least one recipient, wherein the recipients are selected responsive to associating the electronic mail message with the message category.

The system of claim 17 provides for the analysis of incoming messages, and for their assignment to an appropriate category. Once assigned to a category, a response message is automatically generated and addressed to a category-specific list of recipients. One of the benefits of the claimed invention is that category-specific recipients can be predefined, thus improving efficiency for the CSRs and insuring that the most appropriate people within an enterprise see each message.

Billmers does not teach the claimed invention. Billmers discloses a system for filtering e-mails. When an e-mail is received by a filter in Billmers, an index extracted from the contents of the message is created and stored in an index database (see col. 4, lines 8-12). Indeed, the portions of Billmers cited by the Examiner at col. 4, lines 8-25

and col. 7, lines 9-24 respectively teach building an index from extracted text, and using a rule processor to perform storing and alerting actions on incoming messages. As the Examiner admits, Billmers does not disclose "automatically generating a skeleton response message to at least one recipient, wherein the recipients are selected responsive to associating the electronic mail message with the message category."

The addition of Angotti does not cure the defects of Billmers. Angotti is directed to automatically interpreting a received e-mail and determining whether it can be responded to automatically. However, Angotti does not disclose the steps of the claimed invention. For example, Angotti does not disclose "automatically generating a skeleton response message to at least one recipient, wherein the recipients are selected responsive to associating the electronic mail message with the message category." Indeed, nothing in Angotti suggests or describes using message categories to define a set of message recipients to receive the response. Accordingly, claim 17 is patentable over both Billmers and Angotti, both alone and in combination with one another.

Claims 18-19 depend from patentable claim 17, and thus derive patentability from their dependence on claim 17, in addition to reciting their own patentable features. Independent claims 20 and 21 are also patentable for reasons analogous to claim 17.

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Favorable action and allowance of all claims now pending, claims 4-13 and 17-21, are solicited. The Examiner is invited to contact the Attorney for Applicants at the telephone number below if any matters remain outstanding prior to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,  
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